



Cuba Open Team

Information Packet

Location: Cardenas, Cuba

Dates: May 27 – June 6, 2016

Participation Fee: \$1,900

Flight to Cancun, Mexico is not included in the participation fee.



Maranatha in Cuba

Maranatha has been working in Cuba since the 1990s, renovating and building more than 200 Seventh-day Adventist churches.

When Maranatha started the effort, the Adventist Church in Cuba was quite depressed. There were only about 12,000 baptized members, and most of the sanctuaries were in terrible condition. Today, there are more than 31,500 members—an increase that the Church in Cuba attributes to Maranatha.

The work has been slow and complicated, due to government restrictions and other political challenges. Yet God's leading has been steady, and Maranatha's faith has only increased because of our experience in Cuba.

Project Overview

It has been nearly 20 years since Maranatha first learned of the need for a new church in Cardenas. The church was narrow and tight—too small for its 100-plus membership. But the process has been unusually slow—even for Cuba projects. Hurdle upon hurdle, including multiple permit delays, have plagued the project.

In 2014, Maranatha finally received permission to build a new church for Cardenas, and at the end of 2015, the church members voted to tear down their old meeting space to break ground for their new church.

Now YOU can be a part of this special story by helping to build their church. The government has given Maranatha permission to invite volunteers to help build the Cardenas Church. We don't know if or when we will have this opportunity again, so we are stepping out in faith and planning the project.

While we don't yet know what stage of construction the project will be at when volunteers arrive, the group will most likely help build the block walls. Other work could include tying rebar, mixing concrete, and other construction tasks. In addition, volunteers will have a chance to join outreach activities, such as health education programs and Children's Ministry.

Project Schedule

Friday, May 27

Meet at Cubana check-in at Terminal 2 of the Cancun International Airport at 12:00 p.m., noon.

Flight to Havana.

Check-in at hotel.

Saturday, May 28

Worship at La Vibora Church and visit to the Adventist Seminary.

Sunday, May 29

Tour Havana

Monday, May 30

Travel to Cardenas; half-day of work

Tuesday, May 31 – Friday, June 3

Work days

Saturday, June 4

Worship with the Cardenas congregation

Sunday, June 5

Return to Havana

Monday, June 6

Departure from Havana to Cancun; travel home.

In addition to working in Cardenas, the group will also tour the Adventist seminary in Cuba as well as worship with the La Vibora congregation in Havana.

Maranatha is still actively fundraising for the Cardenas church. If you are able, consider making a donation to Maranatha to go towards this project.

To watch a video about the church in Cardenas, [Click Here](#).



Accommodations

The group will spend the first three nights and the last night of the project at a hotel in Havana. The hotel caters to tourists, but standards may not be what you expect from a name brand hotel in the United States or Canada.

In Cardenas, the group will stay at an even simpler hotel, a lodge operated by a Christian Inter-denominational church. The center is called the Centro Cristiano de Reflexion y Diálogo. The double occupancy hotel rooms are basic but clean.

In both hotels, linens are provided, but please plan on bringing your own washcloths. Air-conditioning is available in some rooms, and others will have fans. However, electricity can be intermittent and may not always work. Be prepared for very simple accommodations, and be flexible.



Cardenas accommodation



Cardenas accommodation

Excursions

During the project, volunteers will have the unique opportunity to tour Havana. This iconic city is a blend of cultures, politics, and time. There are clear European and American influences throughout the city in the architecture and vehicles. Parisian-style balconies, Spanish colonial mansions, and vintage American cars are scattered throughout the city. There is also a plethora of political propaganda lining the streets, monuments to government leaders, and neighborhoods crumbling in decay. It is a fascinating place to visit, and volunteers will be able to experience all parts of this intriguing city.

Leadership

David Lopez | Project Coordinator

David joins the group from Rocklin, California where he lives with his wife Alisa, and their two boys Crosby and Carter. David became involved with Maranatha through the Ultimate Workout, Maranatha's teen project, when he was only fourteen years old. Now, he is the director of volunteer projects and helps to coordinate more than 60 volunteer groups annually. When not traveling the world, the Lopez family enjoys outdoor activities and spending time with family and friends. David will oversee all aspects of this trip as project coordinator.



Roger Hatch | Construction Superintendent

Roger joins the group from Avon Park, Florida, where he and his wife, Ellie, have a residence, although most of the time, you can find them on a Maranatha project. He has been involved with Maranatha since the early 1980's, and the work he does with the organization is clearly his passion. Roger is a retired contractor and a Maranatha board member, and he regularly leads construction projects throughout the United States and internationally.



Ed Ledo | Country Director

Ed joins the group from Las Vegas, Cuba, a suburb of Havana, where he lives with his wife, Alena and son, Robert. Ed became involved with Maranatha as a translator. He is now the Country Director for Maranatha in Cuba and has overseen the construction or remodeling of over 200 churches on the island, including the Adventist Seminary, which you will tour.



Expenses

The participation fee for this project is \$1,900. We are asking for a \$500 non-refundable deposit at the time of registration in order to be confirmed. The participation fee covers local housing during the project, purified water and vegetarian meals, a round-trip flight from Cancun, Mexico, to Havana, Cuba, ground transportation in Cuba, a local tour of Havana, secondary accident insurance, entrance visas, a Maranatha t-shirt, and luggage tags.

Maranatha must receive the deposit by March 25, 2016. The rest of the fees and any additional forms are due by May 2. Wait for confirmation of acceptance on the project before purchasing your airfare.

Estimate of Additional Costs

Flight to Cancun, Mexico: \$200 - \$600

Passport: \$130 or \$110 for renewal

Hotel in Cancun: \$60-\$200 per night depending on hotel



About Cuba

Cuba is the largest island nation in the Caribbean, lying approximately 100 miles south of the state of Florida. It is also the second most populous after the island of Hispaniola, home to Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Cuba is composed of several islands, but the largest island consists of flat, rolling plains and a small range of mountains in the southeast. At one point, the entire island was covered with trees, but large areas were cleared to grow sugarcane and tobacco.

The indigenous tribe of Taínos first inhabited Cuba. Then the Spanish colonized the island in the early 1500's, and the indigenous people were virtually wiped out by the unfamiliar diseases brought by the European settlers. After the Spanish-American War, Spain ceded other island nations to the United States. In the midst of this, Cuba gained formal independence from the U.S. in May of 1902. In the 1950's, the country was declared a communist nation after a revolution led by Fidel Castro.

When Castro assumed power, the government became more restrictive of fundamental freedoms and human rights. Political opponents were repressed. In response, the United States imposed embargos on Cuba and broke diplomatic relations. However, within the last 20 years, the government in Cuba has given more rights to its citizens.

Cuba has a rich culture, and each year more and more tourists enjoy its beaches and cities. Cuba is known as a melting pot of Spanish and African culture. The cuisine of Cuba is often composed of traditional Spanish meals with a Caribbean spice and flavor.



Facts and Figures

Capital:
Havana

Population:
11 million

Language:
Spanish

Climate:
Tropical. Dry season November to April.

Currency:
Cuban Convertible Peso
(currency for tourists, not local citizens)

Travel Information

Flights

As a participant, you will purchase your own plane tickets to Cancun, Mexico. Maranatha representatives will meet you in Cancun with your Cuban tourist visas and round-trip flight tickets from Cancun to Havana, Cuba. The group will travel together from Cancun to Havana and will return to Cancun together at the end of the trip. Please wait for confirmation from Maranatha before purchasing your airfare to Cancun. Once the group arrives in Cuba, all transportation will be on a tourist bus. The trip from Havana to Cardenas is approximately two and a half to three hours.

Arrival | Please plan to arrive in Cancun, Mexico (airport code CUN) on the morning of Friday, May 27. You need to meet Maranatha representatives at the Cubana Airlines check-in counter in Terminal 2 at 12 p.m., noon, with your bags. Please do not plan for your flight to arrive in Cancun at noon, as you will have to pass through customs and transition to another terminal. You should arrive in Cancun with plenty of time to meet at the check-in counter precisely at noon, as the check in process for Cubana Airlines is lengthier than most other international flights. The departure time is scheduled for 3:05 pm.

You may need to arrive in Cancun on May 26 in order to be there on the 27th before noon. If you take a flight arriving on the 26th, you will need to book your own hotel for that evening.

Departure | The group will travel back to Cancun together on Cubana Airlines. The flight is scheduled to arrive in Cancun on Monday, June 6, at 2:05 pm. It is very common for this flight to be late. If you plan to return to the United States that day, we recommend that you book your flight to depart after 5:30 p.m.

Arriving Early or Staying Late

Once confirmed, Maranatha will book your flight from Cancun to Cuba. It is important that you do not extend your stay in Cuba past the Maranatha dates. However, Mexico has some beautiful travel destinations. Some of you may choose to arrive in Mexico before May 27 or after June 6 to explore the country on your own. You are welcome to do so, but please make your own hotel and transportation plans for all days outside of the Maranatha dates. If you have any questions, call Maranatha at (916) 774-7700.

Travel Resources

Azumano Travel: 800-454-4099 or by email with Erle at edpenha@ciazumano.com

Butler Travel: 503-879-5005 or by email with Nathanael at nathan@butlertravel.com or with Ellen at ellen@butlertravel.com.

Kayak: www.kayak.com

Ask any of these agencies about booking a hotel if you choose to stay overnight in Cancun.

When contacting the Azumano or Butler travel agencies, make sure you mention Maranatha for the best fares.

Entry Requirements

All passports must be valid for at least six months from the dates of intended travel (December 7, 2016). If you do not have a passport, U.S. citizens can apply at any U.S. post office or online at <http://travel.state.gov>. Canadian citizens can apply online at www.passport.gc.ca. If you do not have a passport or need to renew your current passport, you will need to expedite the process in order to receive your passport in time for this trip. We recommend that you keep your passport with you at all times while traveling through Cuba.

In addition to a passport, Cuba has some additional requirements and considerations.

U.S. citizens must have a Cuban tourist visa in order to enter the country. This visa will be provided by Maranatha representatives in Cancun. The cost for this is included in your participation fee. Maranatha will also have religious visas waiting for you upon arrival in Cuba that you will have with you during your stay in the country. In order to obtain your Cuban visa we will need a color copy of the photo page of your passport at the time of application for this trip.

The departure tax required for departing Mexico to Cuba and for departing Cuba for Mexico are also included in your participation fee. Please be prepared to pay the departure tax (\$20-25 depending on exchange rate) when you depart Mexico for the United States. Usually this tax is included in your ticket; however, we recommend that you be prepared to pay it, just in case.

Luggage Allowance

Your luggage allowance on your flight to Cancun will depend on the airline you are flying and the type of ticket purchased. Please check with your airline or travel agent for weight and piece restrictions. Also, you may want to consider having your luggage plastic-wrapped in Cancun for the flight into Cuba.

Cubana Airlines allows passengers to take two checked bags with a total combined weight of no more than 88 pounds (40 kilos).

Carry-Ons

Most airlines allow you one carry-on bag such as a small suitcase, duffel, or backpack along with a personal item such as a purse or briefcase. However, Cubana Airlines's policy only allows one carry-on bag. Sometimes travelers are allowed to take more, but be prepared to consolidate your bags into one.

Please take all personal medications as well as a day's worth of clothes and toiletries in your carry-on, just in case your luggage is delayed or lost.

Sometimes the airlines will try to persuade you to give up your carry-on by saying there is a problem with overhead space or weight on the plane. Please do not relinquish your bags at boarding. Sometimes these bags end up being left behind. If you are bringing electronics, camera gear, or other valuables with you on the plane, make sure this bag is always with you and not checked.

Health and Safety

Travel Safety

Overall, Cuba is a very safe country to travel in. However, understanding the culture and educating yourself about international travel is the best way to keep safe. Below are a few tips for you to consider.

- Leave valuables (expensive or sentimental) at home.
- Dress conservatively. A flashy wardrobe attracts more attention.
- Use a money belt or concealed pouch for passports and cash. Watch your wallet.
- Don't leave valuables unattended in open sight.
- Avoid marginal areas of cities, dark alleys, and crowds. Use caution and keep moving if you are approached on the street by strangers, including vendors.
- Don't travel alone or at night.

Medical Requirements and Precautions

While Maranatha does everything in its power to ensure safety and security, it is also advisable to do your own research when it comes to the medical precautions.

Vaccines and Medications

The only vaccine required by Maranatha is a current tetanus vaccine. In addition, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends vaccinations for hepatitis A and typhoid. More information is available at www.cdc.gov. Maranatha recommends that you schedule a consultation with a travel clinic doctor prior to travel to talk about medical precautions for your trip to Cuba.



Mosquitos and Other Insects

Mosquitoes and other flying insects can carry a variety of diseases. Personal precautions are strongly recommended to lower the risk of being bitten. Bring a bug repellent with a 30%-50% concentration of DEET. Wear long sleeves, long pants, and closed-toe footwear when possible.

Food and Water

Since food safety standards vary greatly from country to country, and the water can be unsafe to consume in other countries, we recommend that you exercise caution with the food and water you consume while abroad. The food that the Maranatha group provides will be prepared in a safe manner. If you choose to purchase your own food during the project, buy commercially packaged snacks. Food from street stands can cause you to get sick. Drink only purified water or sealed juices and sodas. Do not drink unpurified water or ice cubes, and do not use tap water to brush your teeth or wash vegetables and fruits. Maranatha will provide purified water at the construction site and the hotel where the group will stay. Please bring your own water bottle that you can refill from the large containers.

If at any time during the trip you start to feel sick, please speak with the leadership team as soon as possible.

Miscellaneous

Foreign Cash

Cuba uses the Cuban Convertible Peso (CUC) for tourists. If you wish to purchase anything while you are in Cuba, you should plan on using the Cuban Convertible Peso. Maranatha will be prepared to help you exchange your U.S. dollars to CUC. Any cash you bring should be in new, unmarked bills.

Credit Cards

In the past credit cards could not be used in Cuba if issued by a U.S. bank. While some restrictions have been lifted, you will be better off using cash during the trip.

You can use credit cards in Mexico during your layover. If you do use a credit or debit card, expect a 5% - 12% surcharge for international use. Be careful when using your credit card in public; never let it out of your immediate sight. It is wise to let your credit card company know in advance the dates you will be out of the country so they don't block your card.

Electricity

The standard current in Cuba is 110-120 volt AC (same as the United States and Canada). The standard outlets have two vertical prongs of the same height (Type A). Three prong plugs, with the ground prong, are uncommon. Plug adapters from three-prong to two-prong can be found at many stores like Walmart or Home Depot for about one dollar.



Weather

In May and June, Cuba is entering the rainy season. Temperatures average in the mid 80's Fahrenheit during the day. Evening temperatures can drop, and Cuba is known for trade winds, so you may want to bring a light jacket or sweater.



Time

Cuba is on Cuba Standard Time (UTC/GMT – 5 hours), which is the same as Eastern Standard Time. When the U.S. is on Daylight Savings time, Cuba is on the same time as the Central time zone.

Telephone Dialing and Internet

Because service is so limited, please do not plan on having access to phone service or Internet in Cuba.

How to Register

To register for the Cuba Open Team, please complete the online registration, pay the non-refundable deposit, and submit a color copy of the photo page of your passport by March 25, 2016. You can make this payment by credit card online or over the phone or with a check made out to Maranatha Volunteers International and sent to the address below. If for any reason you need to cancel your participation, please remember the \$500 is non-refundable as it goes towards the Cubana flight and your visas and will have already been spent. Refund of the remainder will depend on the reservations and the project arrangements already made. Please wait for confirmation of acceptance on this trip before purchasing your airfare to Cancun.

Register online at Maranatha.org or over the phone.

Contact Information

Phone: (916) 774-7700

Fax: (916) 774-7701

Email: volunteer@maranatha.org

Website: www.maranatha.org

Mailing Address:

Maranatha Volunteers International

990 Reserve Drive

Suite 100

Roseville, CA 95678

Canadian Payments Only:

Maranatha Volunteers International
Association

c/o V06494C

PO Box 6494, Station Terminal
Vancouver, BC V6B 6R3

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OR CALL (916) 774-7700

All prices are excluding sales tax and shipping.

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All cotton and easy to pack, this cap is sure to keep the sun off your face on a mission project and at home.

WATER BOTTLE \$15



The autosport water bottle by Contigo features a one-touch-button spout for convenient one-handed drinking. It also has a spout shield to protect the spout from debris and dirt when not in use—perfect for the project site.

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